

## Perception of Harm and “Coolness” around Substance Use in Missouri

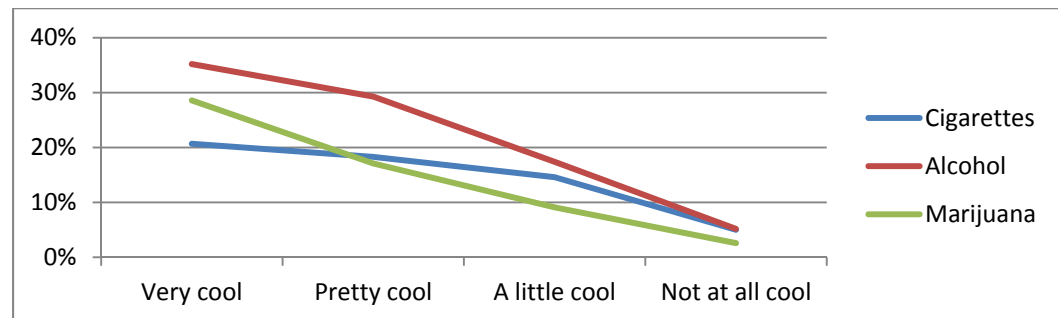


For more  
information  
please contact  
the BHEW at  
314-516-8412  
or  
susan.depue@  
mimh.edu

A young person’s perception of substance use can be a strong factor in their decision to use. The 2014 Missouri Student Survey asked about how “cool” the student’s peer group would perceive a person was if they used substances. It also asked about the risk of harm involved in using substances.

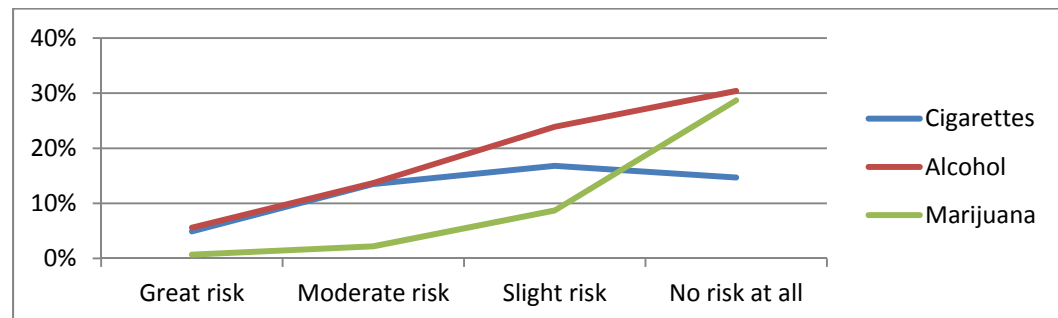
Student use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana is highest when they think that their peer group would perceive use as “very cool”. Use of these substances strongly decreases as perception of coolness decreases, especially for marijuana and alcohol.

**Students reporting using substance 1+ times in past month by their perception of coolness of that substance<sup>1</sup>**



An opposite pattern emerges for perception of harm. The less risky students perceive a substance, the more likely they are to report use of that substance in the past month. This pattern is most notable for marijuana and alcohol use. In fact, marijuana use is almost 30% in students who perceive no risk, but only 1% for those reporting great risk. As with the above graph, cigarettes follow a similar but less dramatic trend.

**Students reporting using substance 1+ times in past month by their perception of harm of that substance<sup>1</sup>**



**Cigarettes:** 1+ pack a day    **Alcohol:** 5+ drinks once or twice a week    **Marijuana:** once or twice a week

Behavioral Health



Epidemiology  
Workgroup

<sup>1</sup> Missouri Student Survey, 2014 Special run